REMARKS

Applicant has carefully reviewed the Application in light of the Final Office Action mailed October 20, 2008 ("Final Office Action"). At the time of the Final Office Action, Claims 1-23 and 25 were pending in the Application and stand rejected. Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of the pending claims and favorable action in this case.

Section 112 Rejection

The Examiner rejects Independent Claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. §112, first paragraph, as failing to comply with the written description requirement. Applicant is prepared to Appeal this issue because there is full support in Applicant's Specification for the subject matter outlined in Independent Claim 1.

Claim Objections

The Examiner rejects Claim 25 indicating that Applicant change newly added claim limitation, "the invalid relationship path" to "an invalid relationship path," limiting conciseness. Applicant has made a minor amendment to comply with the Examiner's request.

Section 102 Rejections

The Examiner rejects Claims 1, 4-9, 13-15, and 18-22 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,675,782 issued to Montague (hereinafter "*Montague*").

Turning to the merits of this case, Independent Claim 1 recites:

A method for regulating access to an object comprising the steps of:

for a plurality of users, allowing each user to designate the relationship characteristics between that user and any other user;

identify one of the plurality of users as an owner of the object;

determining if a selected one of the plurality of users has access to the object by determining if the relationship characteristics on at least one path between the selected one of the plurality of users and the owner of the object is a trusted relationship between each of the users on that path, wherein said path includes at least one additional user beside said owner of the object and the selected one of the plurality of users, and access to the object for the additional user is granted by the selected one, and wherein the additional user defines additional relationship characteristics that grant access to additional objects being held by the additional user.

After reading the commentary from the Examiner on page 19 of the Final OA, Applicant understands the impasse. The Examiner contends that all of the underlined portions above are taught by a recitation of 'controlling access to entities' found in the Abstract of *Montague*, along with FIGURE 5 of that same reference. This is simply untrue.

Applicant is ready to appeal this issue, as the proffered §102 reference is **fundamentally** flawed. First, the Examiner should understand that there is a path being defined by Independent Claim 1 and that path is between a selected one of the plurality of users and the owner of the object. Furthermore [and this appears to be a point of confusion], the path also includes an additional user and access to the object for the additional user is in fact granted by the selected one. Therefore, the Examiner should recognize that this 'selected one' is not merely a passive entity, but an element *that is empowered to control access to the object for the additional user*. Independent Claim 1

continues to explain that the additional user defines additional relationship characteristics that grant access to <u>additional objects being held by the additional user</u>.

What should be envisioned by the Examiner at this point are three entities: the owner, the selected one, and the additional user; all of these entities are connected on a path. Additionally, the Examiner should comprehend that access to the object for the additional user is granted by an intermediary element; namely, the selected one. Moreover, <u>that additional user defines other additional relationship characteristics that grant access to additional objects that it holds</u>. No reference of record, including *Montague*, offers anything even remotely close to these features. Again, to focus better on this issue, the Examiner should be envisioning two buckets of objects and at least two different entities controlling how those buckets can be accessed. Further, there is a path that connects the entities and the entities, in turn, control access to their objects.

In contrast, the *Montague* reference discloses a database configuration that is implementing generic access control lists in their architecture. Where is there anything in *Montague* allowing additional users being able to control access to additional objects? The Specification of *Montague* assigns permission to a benign component <u>that is incapable of defining further access to other objects it holds</u>. No component in the access lists of *Montague* can further define permissions for other objects that such a component might hold. In addition, nothing in *Montague* discloses <u>how the additional user would be granted access by the selected one</u>, which in this case is not the owner. These important limitations are provided for in Independent Claim 1, but no reference of record includes such elements. Applicant has reviewed *Montague* in its entirety and finds nothing that would be relevant to such operations.

Turning to Independent Claim 15, Independent Claim 15 recites:

A method for regulating access to an object, the method comprising the steps of:

identifying an object or a set of objects to which access is to be regulated;

identifying an owner that has control of the object(s);

identifying a relationship path which would otherwise be a valid path;

allowing each relationship element to specify the maximum number of subsequent elements in the path; and

classifying that relationship path as invalid if for any element in that path the number of subsequent elements in the path exceeds the limit specified by that **element such that access to the object(s) is prohibited for all relationship elements in the path and only the owner can access the object(s).**

Montague fails to offer any disclosure relating to "...classifying that relationship path as invalid if for any element in that path the number of subsequent elements in the path exceeds the limit specified by that element such that access to the object(s) is prohibited for all relationship elements in the path and only the owner can access the object(s)." For this passage, the Examiner again cites FIGURE 5 of Montague. Rhetorically: What does that FIGURE show that would even be germane to the underlined passage above?

Independent Claim 15 outlines how each relationship element can specify the **maximum number of subsequent elements in the path** and then subsequently denies access for all relationship elements when that limit is exceeded. In essence, access is completely shut-down when the limit reaches its threshold. Once that occurs, only the owner can subsequently access the object. These important limitations are provided for in Independent Claim 15, but no reference of record includes such elements.

For at least these reasons, Independent Claims 1 and 15 are allowable over the cited reference. Additionally, the corresponding dependent claims from these Independent Claims are also patentably distinct for analogous reasons.

Section 103 Rejections

The Examiner rejects Claims 10-12 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over *Montague* in view of U.S. Patent No. 7,181,017 issued to Nagel (hereinafter *"Nagel"*). The Examiner also rejects Claims 2-3, 16-17, and 24-25 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over *Montague* in view of U.S. Publication No. 2003/0191946 issued to Auer (hereinafter *"Auer"*). The Examiner also rejects Claim 23 under U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over *Montague* in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,850,938 issued to Sadjadi (hereinafter *"Sadjadi"*).

It is respectfully submitted that the rejected claims are patentable over the art of record based on at least the third criterion of obviousness: none of the references alone or in combination teach, suggest, or disclose each claim limitation of the Independent Claims. For example, with respect to Independent Claim 23, no reference of record provides for **"...allowing or disallowing the specified access to the object(s) based on the entity relationship(s) based on the highest level class relationship to the object, the within class resolution rule, and the equivalent class resolution rule."** Note that the decision is based on **all three of these items**: something which is not accounted for in any of the cited references. In essence, this decision becomes comprehensive in nature, as it factors in all three listed items in making an access decision. No reference accounts for such activities.

Turning to Independent Claim 25, no reference of record provides for **"...classifying that relationship path as invalid if for any element in that path the grantee of that element is the distrustee of the distrust relationship, whereby the invalid relationship path prohibits access of the object(s) by any element on the path and only an owner of the object or set of objects has access to the object(s)."** These important limitations are provided for in Independent Claim 25, but no reference of record includes such elements.

For at least these reasons, all of the pending claims have been shown to be allowable as they are patentable over the references of record. Notice to this effect is respectfully requested in the form of a full allowance of these claims.

CONCLUSION

Applicant has now made an earnest attempt to place this case in condition for immediate allowance. For the foregoing reasons and for all other reasons clear and apparent, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of the pending claims.

Applicant believes that no fee is due. If there are matters that can be discussed by telephone to advance prosecution of this application, Applicant invites the Examiner to contact Thomas J. Frame at (214) 823-1241.

Respectfully submitted,

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